



## **Landmark Study Yields First-Ever Data on Distance Education in Elementary and Secondary Schools**

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Eighty percent of public school districts said that offering courses not available at their schools is one of the most important reasons for having distance education, according to a new report that provides the first national data on distance learning in public K-12 schools. In addition, half cited distance learning as very important in making advanced placement or college-level courses available to all students.

"Distance Education Courses for Public Elementary and Secondary School Students: 2002-03," released today by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), showed that one-third (36 percent) of public school districts and 9 percent of public schools had students enrolled in distance education courses in 2002-03.

In this study, distance education refers to courses taken for credit and offered to elementary and secondary school students in a district where the teacher and student are in different locations.

"Distance education in high school is gaining popularity across the nation," said Susan Patrick, director of the Department's Office of Educational Technology. "As the report shows, distance education is more prevalent in rural districts, where distance learning may be the students' only available option. And districts that already have students enrolled in distance education courses indicated that they have plans to increase these offerings."

Other key findings from the survey include:

- A greater proportion of large districts than medium or small districts had students enrolled in distance education courses (50 vs. 32 and 37 percent, respectively). In addition, a greater proportion of districts located in rural areas than in suburban or urban areas indicated that they had students enrolled in distance education courses (46 compared with 28 and 23 percent, respectively).
- The percentage of schools with students enrolled in distance education courses varied substantially by the instructional level of the school. Overall, 38 percent of public high schools offered distance education courses, compared with 20 percent of combined or ungraded schools, 4 percent of middle or junior high schools, and fewer than 1 percent of elementary schools.
- In 2002-03, there were an estimated 328,000 enrollments in distance education courses among students regularly enrolled in public school districts. Students enrolled in multiple courses were counted for each course taken. Thus, enrollments may include duplicated counts of students.
- Of the total enrollments in distance education courses, 68 percent were in high schools, 29 percent were in combined or ungraded schools, 2 percent were in middle or junior high schools, and 1 percent were in elementary schools.

- There were an estimated 45,300 enrollments in Advanced Placement or college-level courses offered through distance education in 2002–03. This represents 14 percent of the total enrollments in distance education.
- The proportion of all distance education enrollments that are in Advanced Placement or college-level distance education courses is greater in small districts compared to medium or large districts (24 vs. 10 and 7 percent, respectively).
- When asked which technology was used to deliver the greatest number of distance education courses, 49 percent of districts selected two-way interactive video, more than any other technology.
- Of those districts with students enrolled in distance education courses in 2002–03, about half (48 percent) had students enrolled in distance education courses delivered by a postsecondary institution. Thirty-four percent of districts had students enrolled in distance education courses delivered by another local school district, or schools in other districts, within their state.
- Those districts with students already enrolled in distance education courses were also very likely to have plans for expanding their distance education courses in the future. Seventy-two percent of districts with students enrolled in distance education courses planned to expand their distance education courses in the future. Costs were cited as a major factor, more often than any other factor, as preventing districts from expanding their distance education courses.

Thirty-six percent of districts that were planning to expand their distance education courses selected course development and/or purchasing costs as a major factor preventing their expansion.

The findings in the report are organized under: distance education for public school students; technologies used for delivering distance education courses; entities delivering distance education courses; reasons for having distance education courses; and future expansion of distance education courses. Questionnaires for the survey on which the report is based were mailed to a representative sample of 2,305 public school districts in the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

**The full text of Distance Education Courses for Public Elementary and Secondary School Students: 2002–03 is available online at**  
<http://www.nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2005010>.

**This document (rather long at 97 pages) is found on our WebCT Vista Website (Lesson 10) it is called**

**Nat Ctr 4 Ed Statistic DL K 12 3042005**

**Your assignment is read only pages 1-17 in the document**